The CHRISTIAN WAY IN A CHANGING WORLD

by F. G. COFFIN, A. M., D. D.

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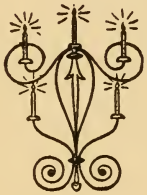

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Foreword

The following address was given by Dr. Frank G. Coffin, President of The General Convention of the Christian Church, before said Convention, in its quadrennial session at Urbana, Illinois, on the evening of October 20, 1926. The Convention expressed its appreciation of the address by a unanimous and enthusiastic vote, and requested its publication for free distribution, and recommended to the Department of Publications that it be so published and distributed.

J. F. BURNETT,
Secretary General Convention of the Christian Church.

THE CHRISTIAN WAY IN A CHANGING WORLD

President's Quadrennial Address to The General Convention of the Christian Church at Urbana, Illinois, October 20, 1926

F. G. Coffin, A. M., D. D.

After over a century and a quarter of history-making we gather in this quadrennial session in the midst of portent. This is not peculiar to us. It is shared by all. Denominational gatherings evidence a groping for the right thing to meet a difficult time. The program of the church universal is largely tentative. It is doubtful whether uncertainty were ever more widesread than now. It is not uncertainty as to convictions, need, or ultimate victory. It is rather as to what is appropriate and adaptable to the immediate present. Churches are experimenting and all are feeling that if the right thing has been found it is not in successful operation.

We have not yet rallied from the shivers of a world explosion which left scattered about a confusion of fragments in society, business, and statecraft. The world is again without form and void and awaits the moving of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep that confusion may give

place to order and that chaos may become cosmos. The war turned the head of the world and broke its heart. It has emerged sullen, fearful, and feelingless.

A CHANGING WORLD

That the world is changed none will doubt, but how deeply no one knows. It is now a realm of swaying contours, religiously, educationally, and internationally. Nations after persistent effort have got little farther than an inventory of their confusions. All of the agencies through which a better order was hoped have accomplished naught but a partial alignment of forces. The actual program of reconstruction is yet to become operative. No Christian doubts that it is coming, or that it will be more effective than any previously inaugurated, but nothing is more certain than that it is not yet here nor immediately approaching. These facts should not affect our courage but they should have tremendous bearing upon our duty. Perhaps in our estimate of the situation we are making that everlasting error of man—assuming that because there are not external evidences of the order of things that should be they are not. Any order of society has first its unseen building and then its visible operation. The finest ideas often apparently broken down may be the while developing greater root strength to sustain a more vigorous life above the surface later. Let not faith waver in the fact that there is both a Power and a

way for these times. Let us rather industriously seek the right way in the right place, for in unsettled conditions the wrong thing may easily be done.

Our present confusion is further increased by a horde of theories unrelated to Christianity which are offering what is advertised to be a way out. An unsettled public mind is in a mood to accept, out of sheer desperation, what at another time it would see reasons to reject. The danger from this angle is amply proved and should not be minimized. Our age should try the spirits to see whether they be of God.

PECULIAR ASPECTS

Open and determined attacks are being made upon the advanced ideals of our Christianity. With demoniacal persistence some are still determined that men shall ruin themselves through drink only that others may profit financially from their destruction. The brotherhood of mankind unmistakably taught by Christ is being openly opposed by a narrow so-called patriotism, a group of munition manufacturers and organizations which ferment racial prejudice. The struggle for ideals is far from ended. Many areas in our land are in open rebellion against the Spirit of Christ. A paralysis through materialism has become all but epidemic with a resulting spiritual languor and inertia. Some of the churches instead of inspiring men for the Jesus way of living and practice

have turned back to the ancient obsession of heresy branding. As always they have less to say of that greater crime of heresy of spirit with which a heresy of opinions cannot be compared. Even the righteous speak through a multitude of broken minorities, which betimes seem to complicate more than to help.

One appraising look around convinces the thoughtful observer that an hour of painful need for the infusion of the spirit and the practice of the teaching of Jesus is upon the world. The heathen areas are saying very plainly, "We endorse your Christ and His teachings, but your representation of Him is a menace to our welfare."

The present tensity makes small-mindedness and indifferent consecration the sin of apostasy and an exceeding crime against Christ and humanity. The whole situation crowds upon this Convention in common with other branches of the church universal as a storm-swollen mountain current. There can be no turning back, no, not even a hesitancy. The way through must be found here and now. If men of scrawny souls have not the courage or sacrifice to go, let them return unto their tents and not deter others. An urgency from above, from within, and from without is upon us. The Past, with its lessons, presses, and the Future, with its promises, beckons. The Present must achieve a sacredness from what we do here. We must not waste the time which discourage-

ment would consume, nor indulge any disposition toward a mood of blues. If blues there be, confine them to that type of which Anna L. Schull sings:

"There are heavenly blues—
The blue of tranquil seas,
But pleasant.
If you would have them
Pray have these."

MORE HOPEFUL INTERPRETATIONS

Against this not altogether encouraging background of the church general Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, President of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, wrote recently in the London Spectator:

> "One who surveys present American religious life can hardly doubt that there are tendencies now at work within it which are bound to make themselves felt powerfully in the years to come."

Of these he mentions three; the attack on great social and international questions; the progress of co-operation among the churches; and the weightier emphasis on the inner life. In these three tendencies he sees sufficient hope for the future.

The gravity of the world situation must be admitted but not its hopelessness. The promises of Christ are not to be discounted. They are the in-

ventories of future attainments. We labor not with uncertainty, nor will any gropings for the way be of long duration. His word standeth sure and that word is that the Kingdoms of this world are to become the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ. If this Convention possesses that trinity of requisites, an irresistible faith, a consecrated, united aggressiveness, and plain common sense it will function.

In our specific tasks as a denomination puzzling questions confront us. But these questions involve only their own merits. We shall not have to take into account any hidden animus or deep-seated prejudices. Our differences are not of feeling but of opinion. Differences in the Christian Church have never been dangerous. It is our indifferences which threaten us. Ours is the plain, though not easy, problem of together finding a way through.

By comparison we are exceedingly fortunate. There is no skeleton in our church closet which, though not showing itself, sticks bony fingers into every question. We have both fundamentalists and modernists, but we have no fundamentalist-modernist contest, or even cleavage, to fix alignments on every plan to be decided and every official to be elected.

As the Christian Century, to which I am indebted for some suggestions herein, says editorially in referring to this Convention:

> "As the greatest tolerance is shown divergent theological viewpoints, ranging from Unitarianism to Fundamentalism, the Conventions of this denomination are not as sensational as those of some other denominations."

We have no harrowing question of open and closed membership on the prompting of which all other questions are settled. Among us there are no rival sectional or other groups, each with its pet theories or favorite candidates to embarrass procedures with subsurface manipulations. We have no duties of creed revision, or discipline tinkering, to set the old and the young at variance. No disgruntled minority will annoy the Convention at every turn. Our fellowship will not be blighted by jealous rivalries or scandals in administration. How fortunate we are. Let us thank God for what we have not. We do have big tasks to be performed with limited resources, but that is all.

The quadrennium which this Convention closes affords much encouragement. We are forced to think so much of our perplexities that we may lose the inspiration of our successes. Probably, notwithstanding the deluge of difficult situations which have developed near its close, it has been

the most successful inter-convention period of our history. Our embarrassments are concerned largely with insufficient finance. This fact in itself is some evidence of a fulfilled function. True, it may be the sign of a more fundamental shortage in spirit, but even so, the deep concern of so many of our people makes sure that such lack is not universal.

During the quadrennium we have built the best church edifices of our history, some of which have been as good as the best built by anybody. Probably the aggregate amount spent for improvements far exceeds that of any similar period. There is among us almost universally a finer efficiency in local church administration. The finances are better managed and workers are more competent. What is of special encouragement is that the spirit and effort to improve are well nigh universal. To this end we have a more teachable constituency. There are more university and college trained men in our pulpits and fewer people in the pews thinking that this process of training has spoiled them. Preachers on the whole are more efficient and forward looking. They are also better remunerated. Conferences evince a quickened interest in their natural functions and responsibilities. More of them are undertaking church extension programs within their own bounds. There is evident a stronger spirit of mutual consideration and co-

operation among the churches. They that are strong are bearing the infirmities of the weak more and pleasing themselves less. Our present colleges are rapidly advancing despite their heavy burdens. Their standards are higher and their combined enrollments larger than such aggregate registration at any previous time. The periodicals of the church are at the zenith of their merit in editorial strength, scope, adaptability, and serviceability. Our general church departments all show an advance in features of their work. Their activities are unprecedented and their methods of promotion strong. There have been unusual ingatherings through evangelistic effort, and a strengthened appreciation and sense of responsibility for soul-saving have been passed on to the laity. Our work abroad has kept a moving pace with the gains at home. Our missionaries have also made themselves almost indispensable to the common movements of the church at large in the foreign field. The church as a whole is better informed, more progressive, and more open to conviction. Its cohesion and group consciousness are stronger. The work of the confernces is better sysematized and correlated. We are more widely and favorably known for our work's sake. There was a time when we scrambled to make ourselves known by our good words, but these carried an unavoidable criticism of others. We are now becoming known by our good works, against which

there is no prejudice. Our influence is constantly extending farther outside our own fellowship and at no time have we given actual and contributory leadership to so many interdenominational enterprises as now. Our young people are being rallied to new work and responsibility in a most encouraging way. This in itself is a promise that the church of the future will be still more efficient. Instead of being exhausted by the greatest concerted effort of our history, the Forward Movement, or depressed by partial failures, the feeling is universal trat we must go forward and undertake larger things. Is not the feeling justified that no Convention has been held with greater possibilities of becoming historically pivotal than this?

COURAGE FOR THE TASK

But this inventory of assets, no matter how satisfying, should encourage us to consecration instead of self congratulation. As another has said, "Never let success go to your head, or failure to your heart." Any tendency to boast will find quick rebuke in the thought of how much more we ought to have done. After doing all that we have done let us very humbly say, "We are unprofitable servants." We do need to encourage ourselves in the conviction that we can do something worth while. Too many are saying, "We are in our own sight as grasshoppers." With such impression of ourselves we can have no ground for complaint if

others regard us similarly. Out of our subconsciousness we will act as grasshoppers, have grasshopper visions and execute grasshopper tasks. Let us here remind ourselves that we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us, and that through Him we have title to all things. Let our deepest concern be in doing our full share, not in getting our full share. No organization can ever know what God wants to do with it until it discovers His will through toil. Ways are not now revealed through dreams. They appear mostly out of labor.

Two weakening habits of spirit persist in our history: fear and timidity have hindered us. The lack of a dauntless faith has cost us many victories. Our beginning was a modest separation from the then active centers. We shrank from combat and competition. We gave and asked a severe letting alone. We developed an unwarranted desire for quiet. Our urge upon our own membership was meaningless, for we feared pressure would interfere with their religious liberty. As a result everything in the church's program became a personal elective. You know well the result. My own boyhood memory includes conferences which were more zealous to keep from possible intrusion upon individual liberty than to assert the rights and functions of the body of believers in any aggressive way.

The second habit of spirit, incongruous as it may seem when placed beside the first, has been what may be styled imitative competition, or in more modern English, "Keeping up with the Joneses." The genius of denominationalism is competition. So each has tried to do the thing which the other did and to do it in a bigger way. There have been not a few grotesque and defunctioned Davids because of Saul's armour and they dared not throw it aside and do a real service for God with their own apt sling, because the armour was conventional; so Goliath lived defiantly on.

What a tragedy if because of some inner weakness of spirit this Convention should fail to function adequately in the progress of events! What a cloud of witnesses of the "might-have-beens" will rise up to condemn us. A histrionic consciousness should pervade these days. A deep sense of obligation to the future should make their deliberations sacred. Great consecration began the movement of which this Convention is a part. An endless chain of sacrifice has brought it with an accumulating strength and largening opportunity to this hour. The noble lives of our spiritual ancestry lift hands of blessing over us tonight and urge us forward with the trust which they have passed to us. Their small and apparently hopeless beginnings encourage us to both undertake and carry on. As Paul puts it "apart from us they shall not be made perfect." The most ap-

propriate memorial which we can dedicate to their memory is an exceeding service for Christ upon the foundation laid by them.

This Convention will get nowhere by beginning with a list of the assets it does not have, though it must not presume to have what it does not. It has much which our Lord can use. Its great business is to get all of it WHERE He can use it.

SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It would not be courteous for your President to discuss in detail those subjects which have been committed for pre-convention investigation and report, but he may appropriately express the hope that when this Convention closes a way will have been found to do effectively the following eleven things:

(1) To touch with electric potency the lives of our people with the all-stimulating Spirit of God, in order that all inspiration and domination may be from that source.

(2) Fully to effect the co-operation of our people in common tasks and to accomplish a cohesion which will not be weakened by geographical lines or segregated interests. The Convention as a whole should be made responsible for each of its parts and each part for the whole of the Convention. The church east, west, north and south should have one program backed by a universal co-operation. All who co-operate in control should

co-operate in responsibility. We are living in the present and should build our program accordingly.

(3) To enlarge our financial resources to meet the increasing demands upon us. The Federal Trade Commission states that only about four per cent of America's wealth is in non-profit institutions and enterprises such as religious, educational, benevolent, and miscellaneous institutions, foundations, trusts, and enterprises. Only four per cent to the spiritual side of human existence!

(4) To increase our efficiency, reduce expenses wherever possible, and strengthen every needed enterprise among us.

(5) To make possible an enlargement of our activities in many fields.

(6) To inaugurate better and simpler systems for the conduct of our enterprises, especially providing that each shall have its rightful place and no one infringe upon the welfare of the other.

(7) To face squarely and unafraid every situation within our life.

(8) To secure a statesmanship in the officiary of the Convention which shall be marked by both consecration and competency.

(9) To put a new spirit of optimism, enthusiasm, industry, and persistence among our churches and members.

(10) To focus the interest of our people upon the practice of Christianity instead of its theories.

(11) To blend our energies in the most effective way with those of all other people of God to the end that His Kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

THREE PRESSING NEEDS

There are three features of our church life to which more than ordinary attention should be directed. They are at the very vitals of our organic life and some strengthening measures must be inaugurated if we are to survive.

The first of these is that our Home Mission program must be greatly strengthened. The response to every general undertaking of the church attests the value of metropolitan churches. A more vigorous program with its objective points already distributed to awaken personal interest in every section is essential to both our present morale and our future success.

The second feature is our colleges. The Burlington Convention attacked the college situation of our church in the most masterly way of all the Conventions up to that time. Unfortunately the plan was not carried out. It seems impossible for our colleges to exist honorably under the present system, yet they are essential to our mission.

The third feature demanding special attention is our finances. This is largely an embodiment of the other two. Both an increase in income and a

reduction of the number of offerings seem necessary. An improved system must be found.

In revising our methods radical changes should be most carefully thought out. We should be careful not to sacrifice the results being realized under present methods until we can be confident that the changes will yield larger returns. It must be borne in mind that official contacts with our people are not absolute and that new methods cannot be put into operation quickly. In the matter of finances our enterprises cannot survive a reduced income until a different method gets into operation. It will be disastrous if in making any changes there is a hiatus between the old and the new.

BUILDING THE WHOLE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

It will be far from enough if this Convention concerns itself only with the tasks within our own body. We must envisage the whole of Christ's Kingdom and all of its parts. There is more awaiting action here than a few denominational chores. We must work in that field which Christ said was the world.

Spiritual vision in this day must be multifocal. Once the church conceived its whole duty as that of saving individuals. Now she feels no less obligation to redeem a social order. Then she hoped

to save civilization by saving its units, now she knows a significant percentage of these units will never be saved unless the order of which they are a part is redeemed. "When the soul of man contacts with the soul of God religion is the result. When the soul of man contacts with the souls of other men society results." Society presupposes democracy and it is successful only to the extent that it is democratic. Therefore the democratic church must prevail, for democracy needs nothing so much as she needs a church and the things for which the church stands. It is pathetic that the church is touching in an influencing way so few of the world's population. Even in our own, a Christian land, the number without the church entirely untouched is large, while the number within who are controlled by its teaching, first, last, and all the time, is pitiably small.

The problem of the church seems to be largely to reconvert a Christian world. Some one has remarked that the world came into the church in the fourth century and the church has never been able to get it out. The conduct of society is proof of the statement. There seems to be a greater willingness to approve the gospel than to go to the church to listen to it. Is the fault with the listener or with the church?

Christ gave an ideal of religion with attainment, but with many religion is only abstainment. Not a few give themselves credit for a high grade

of Christianity because they refrain from doing evil, such practice is only the minor portion of Christianity. The demands of the Christianity taught by Christ are not fulfilled until one is industrially good. Jesus condemned neglect and inactivity in the five virgins who failed to take oil with their lamps; in the man who made no use of his talent, and in the rich man who did not help Lazarus. The condemnation of the great assize is to be "inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these." The idleness of average Christians is the curse and travesty of religion. Because of it there are flabby moral muscles and a poor circulation of the truth. Idle Christians are spiritually anaemic, with coated tongues and nervous faith. A strong, well-fed man without a job is as pitiful as a wizened boy without food. May God save us from the plaintive neutrals.

The lives which make up our churches are either contributory or parasitic. They are "going about doing good" like their Master, or are beneficiaries upon the labor of others. Religious indigency, seeking alms for self at many doors, is common. The place of prayer and the house of God are often visited only for personal advantage.

The real test of the value of a man's creed is the products of his character. A man is as big as the world he lives for. The Christian is only incidentally a beneficiary of Christianity. He is rather a propagating factor in it. To it he devotes him-

self. The price of the best is never less than all that a man has. Our Christianity has often suffered eclipse because men have not made its purpose the highest objective of their lives or have been unwilling to pay the price at which its success must come. The preference for personal ease has slackened the pace of Kingdom progress. Men have in effect repeated the attitude of an English lord who is reported to have said: "If we must have a religion let us have one that is cool and comfortable" and they have served as fervently as that character built by Charles Reade who "paid his mother a regular allowance with all the affection of clock work." Oh, the paralyzing effect of goalless, passionless, actionless folks in the church. The religious need of the day was epitomized by the Crown Prince of Sweden in his closing address to the World Conference on Life and Work, as unity and intensity.

We have talked of the ideal church—a thing which never will be because it is made up of unideal people. Our need is a vitalized church where men express Christ in His many phases, because Christ actually lives in them. The Word, to be effectual, must once more become flesh and live among men so that they will behold a glory as of the begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Goodness in human society is as contagious as badness if its exposures are as effective. Christianity is not to be made after the pattern of an

obsolete day which bears little resemblance to our own. It is the vital righteousness of Christ, through his followers, applied to concrete situations of these modern times. We've been so obsessed in quarreling about whether we should take Christ literally that we've forgotten to take Him seriously. The greatness of a church is not as often assumed, its property value, the size of its minister's salary, or the length of its membership roll, but the high qualities of Christ expressed in the character and service of its communicants. It would seem that a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness is soon due, but it will arrive only through men with creative moral power derived from the unity of their lives with Christ.

The Christian religion was not originated to supply material for the construction of theories, but to furnish power and method for the building of righteous lives. As Edwin Markham says:

"We all are blind until we see
  That in the Human plan
Nothing is worth the making
  If it does not make the man.
Why build these cities glorious
  If man unbuilded goes?
In vain we build the world, unless
  The builder also grows."

In a recent article on "Martyrs Not Workers," Alva W. Taylor says:

"Our greatest failures have come when we attemped to squeeze Christ's teachings into a system; that has always meant leaving out more than we got in, and even when we attained our goal we lost His. When we make the church an end within itself we fail by succeeding; it too must become a vicarious servant, losing its life to save it. We might win all men to any one of the creeds, but we would lose the kingdom by doing it, for the best of them are but broken lights of truth. Our best devices are most honored when they bear their fruitage and become mold for the richer sowing. We have won millions to creed, then failed them by refusing to abandon that creed for a better one. We have enlisted millions in the church, then made that church a holy institution instead of a transforming power, willing to lose its own life for the sake of the kingdom. We have cleansed character from spots of worldliness, but have failed to make it a leaven of righteousness in the social order. Having rooted out some evil customs, we have imagined all our ways sanctified and refused to move on to larger victories."

"The Kingdom of God is not a scheme of things; it is a leaven of righteous purpose—a kingdom of service. Its goal is never

reached, yet every one advances it who has done his best for his generation."

WRONG EMPHASIS

The religion of Christ is so large and inclusive that no one can see it all, so a single feature of it well seen has to some become the whole. This error has caused over-rigorousness about the comparatively unimportant and indifference to that which is really vital. Religion has suffered repeatedly from the tyranny of trifles. Notions at best incidental to real religion were themselves made religion. Could one forget the sacred thing it burlesques religion as ofttimes practiced would be the world's interminable comedy. Trivial differences, such as the way of wearing the beard, dressing the hair and fastening the clothes have been the cause of cleaving the church into sections. Always we have been in the throes of some discussion which results in a misplaced emphasis and scattered strength. Nothing has so mussed up the natural orderliness of our Christianity as our many theological scuffles over nothings.

Upon this one has said, "God has called us to build temples, not to whittle sticks." The Pharisees of old were not the only ones strenuous for minute interpretations and indifferent to vital things, ever "straining out gnats and swallowing camels."

In the recent grotesque frenzy of heresy hunting, were one not wise he could easily conclude that religion is an approved set of opinions and only that, and that the whole of it subjectively and objectively is only a theory of the intellect. It is not made a necessary resource for the life of men but something to be intellectually validated. One group has tried to make it "intellectually respectable" instead of vitally useful. The other has been trying to make it the scientific explanation of physical facts. Both have seemed to forget that "my words, they are spirit and they are life." What a swarm of empty fancies all these seem to be when compared with the primary purpose of Christ. To be alarmed over every new theory suggests that we are not confident of the foundation upon which Christianity rests. Our concern is unnecessary. We but do ourselves harm when we put out our hand to steady the ark of God.

When religion is emphasized as a thing of mind and dogma it moves toward exclusion. When it is made a matter of vital righteousness it tends to a larger inclusion. The intolerant attitude of purely intellectual religion is at the bottom of our divided christendom. What a pity that religion should ever become the handmaid of prejudice.

Uniformity of mental acceptances is as impossible to accomplish as uniformity of facial contour. Sectarianism lives because a wrong appraisal of religion has ruled. The practice of

Christian living cannot be sectarian. It is omni-inclusive. Let us make this clear by three references not original with your speaker. Take the Roman claim to absolute authority. It is right or it is wrong. You are in or you are out and that's the end of it. Refer to the Episcopal theory of ordination, valid only by a bishop presumed to be of apostolic succession. There is no middle ground. You are included by it or excluded by it. Again, take the insistence upon immersional baptism, or any baptism as an essential to salvation. It dogmatically admits of no compromise. You dip or you're damned. All three of these are intellectual hypotheses, for only God actually knows their truth. Yet they are put forth as imperative verities. They give no opportunity for variety of thinking. As held they must cleave the followers of Christ into sections. They are unavoidably divisive. If we turn to the character side of Christianity it is unifying. There is nothing in good work, prayer, or personal consecration which separates. The more these are practiced the more they unify those who engage in them.

There is a vast amount of theological opinion which is the result of what Edwin Grant Conklin once called "wishful thinking," that is, thinking wishfully rather than rationally. Men desire to arrive at certain conclusions when they shall have examined the evidence. Their church has so declared itself or they just have a natural liking for

that kind of doctrine. So, they start their thinking and keep on going until they reach the desired goal.

Intellectualistic religion is always controversial, usually bigoted and frequently intolerant. It is productive of ecclesiastical strife and censoriousness. The plea of its participants is that all its efforts are a quest for truth. Truth is important but there is much that God has not told us and perhaps never will tell us.

As all nature's myriad changes
Still one changeless power proclaim,
So through thought's wide kingdom ranges
One vast meaning, e'er the same:
This is Truth—eternal Reason—
That in Beauty takes its dress,
And serene through time and season,
Stands complete in Righteousness."

Truth has a way of taking care of itself. We need not burden ourselves with apprehensions. It will not be destroyed. As David Starr Jordan puts it: "Religious die, religion never."

The heresies of yesterday have in not a few instances become the orthodoxies of today. The ease with which fads of doctrine have slipped away should quiet our fears. They have not been killed. They did not have to be. They just appropriately, but of necessity, died. There are two ways of estimating a tree—one is by testing the

fruit, the principle of determination advanced by Christ; another is by digging it up and microscopically examining its roots. The former feeds the world, but the latter kills the tree. The inquisitional spade and cleaving knife may satisfy the minds of some people but they mark the end of fruit bearing. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, because ye bear much fruit." It is both criminal and suicidal to waste the energies of the church in a war of words when the world is dying for the practice of the life principles taught by Christ. Life-savers prove their professional disqualification if they let men drown while arguing as to which boat shall be used to effect the rescue.

The effort to change what was a heart passion of Christ into a verbal category about Him is sacrilege. We've trumped up many less important, but the really great question about Christ is, are we for Him and the things for which He stood. He brought new standards of moral judgment. Do we employ them? He announced a keener principle of honesty. Do we use it? He taught a holy principle of brotherhood. Do we build our society upon it? We may start with the historic facts of Christ, but these must emerge into a great moral fact and all result in an all potent dynamic fact in all things. He must actually be all to us and in all that is proposed and accomplished.

Christianity cannot be constricted into a system of thinking, a creed, a shibboleth, a ceremony, a mode or a garb. It is a duplication of the Christ life in the world of today and the church in its highest form is but the institutionalized purpose of Christ among men. It may not be doing the sort of thing which marked the first century of its life, or at least not doing it in the same way. I doubt if that is regulative. It should be doing the sort of thing He would have done now.

There can be no such radical vice inherent in the constitution of things made of God as a war of intellectual tenets which will destroy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" and the plans of Christ for his world. Perhaps different schools of thought have their own value in that each by its own little ray of light reveals what is, or what is not, true and valid.

It hath been declared, my brethren, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say to every one of you that saith "I am of Fundamentalism"; and "I of Modernism"; and "I of Sectarianism"; and "I of Christ": Is Christ divided? Was Fundamentalism crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Modernism? There should be schisms in the body, but the members should have the same care one for another, and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of

Christ and members in particular. Covet earnestly thy best gift and yet show I unto you a more excellent way—the way of all embracing love.

If old theories must be taken down in the clearer light of a new age let the process have all the reverence to which the faithful dead have title and not as Napoleon ruthlessly driving his battle horses through DaVinci's "Last Supper," and wrecking the treasures of the temples of God. Democracy of religion does not make necessary the triumph of either liberal or conservative. It may include the persistence of both in a program of good work. Let the wheat and the tares grow together until His harvest.

This recent theological hurricane has left behind it an area quite denuded of the Christianity that is alive. A few stark stalks, dead but standing, bear witness to unconstructive unbelief, for we have been *so* industrious to tell what we do not believe. Its blighting chill threatens the life of that Christianity which is vital. Let us implore God for a spiritual passion and practice identical with Christ, forgetting those things that are behind and pressing on in the way of love, unselfishness, and service.

LARGE TASKS AHEAD

The tasks which challenge the modern church are by no measurement small, nor can they be per-

formed inside of church buildings though they may be begun there. They will require all the ability which is inherent in men and all the power which they have capacity to receive from God. Criticism is easy but construction is a tremendous task and reconstruction is still more difficult. Society is out of joint. Civilization is unchristian. The church as it is cannot meet the needs of civilization as they are. Certain social misinterpretations have stood so long that they have become almost petrified into our social order. There are assumptions which are accepted as axioms. We call the most damnable explosions of hatred patriotism. Murder, robbery, and moral outrage are classified in the international card index under the title of war. The methods and morals of the jungle have been exalted into a sacred system. Frazier remarks in "The Golden Bough,"—"When all is said and done our resemblances to the savage are still far more numerous than our differences." The caveman did not die. He camouflaged and lives on. Men have been shamelessly told that if they were killed murdering their brothers of another nation, and especially of another race, their effort to carry out their murderous intent would assure a life in glory. What crimes a sycophant church has promoted while the world has cried on in its pain as an unmothered babe! Between the spirit of the battle field and the spirit of Christ there can be no possible reconciliation. One must

yield to the other. The Christian conscience cannot be silent. War must go as the gladiator went. Some day it will be as rare to hear war defended as it is now to hear slavery upheld. Christianity does not depatriotize men. It refines their patriotism and co-ordinates it with the patriotisms of others and with the Kingdom of God. It moralizes international, interracial, and intersectional life.

Industrial and economic war shares the same spirit but varies the weapons. The authorship of this evil belongs to all of the promoters of its controversies. The Passaic battlegrounds fill the sectors of industry and they have settled only minor matters. The spirit which promotes them still lives and will repeat them. Under the cheap casuistry that business is business, business ofttimes becomes robbery. Unblushing dishonesty flourishes with the only concern being not avoidance of detection, but escape of penalty. High finance loses its guilt because of its highness.

Race prejudice becomes mother to a multitudinous brood of crimes against both man and God. The possession of it is even regarded as a mark of honor and a badge of patriotism. Men seem to think they have acted nobly by expressing it in every possible way. Monsieur Revon has well said: "The yellow peril will be no longer a thing to fear when the white peril shall cease."

The World Missionary Conference spoke thus to the Church in the homelands—

"There is an imperative demand that national life and influence as a whole be Christianized, so that the entire impact, commercial and political, now of the West upon the East, and now of the stronger races upon the weaker, may confirm and not impair the message of the missionary enterprise.

"If we could help Africa upward, that alone would be worth living for. If we could Christianize the impacts of the western world —commercial, social, educational, political— that would be worth dying for twice over. A larger place has to be secured for the ideal of co-operation among nations: we have to place deep in the heart of our own and other nations a sense of universal fellowship. We have to re-assert the gospel in all life. It may seem madness to attempt such big, apparently impossible things. It is the madness of Jesus Christ."

In America influences undermining the home are steadily at work. Easy divorce has filled our land with matrimonial adultery and given excuse to widespread immorality.

The world's commerce, the world's politics, and Christianity are placed in entirely separate com-

partments of life and public affairs are excluded from the high plane of the gospel. Surely the Golden Rule was meant for the politician as well as for the deacon of the church.

As H. G. Wells says: "We have tamed and bred the beasts but we have still to tame and breed ourselves." Wesley adds: "Passion and prejudice govern the world under the name of Reason." Man has mastered physical forces before he has mastered himself. It was a bad day for the world when men became scientists, inventors, and producers before they became Christlike. They have built machinery that they are not competent in spirit to manage. They have power aplenty, but there is lacking moral purpose to use it helpfully.

Democracy, upon which some have staked their all, though doubtless the best form of government for a sensible people, effects few changes. "It talks too much, acts too little and seems unable to get its best men for its highest work." In it are ever present the two classes—those who are seeking power and those who are bent on culture. It is certain that a better order is dependent upon better men.

The creative moral power for this product is not to be found apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. The world's redemption can be accomplished only by new creatures in Christ, moved by new motives and living new lives. The world's conditions are out of gear because the world's life is out of

sorts. The disorder is due to moral and spiritual causes and here must the corrective be applied and it cannot be less than regeneration. We cannot accept that unthinking optimism that "human nature as it is can be rubbed up here and there by an educational culture and serve its purpose for another thousand years." It is the soul of civilization which needs the Great Physician.

A REUNITED CHURCH NECESSARY

Your speaker is of the opinion that the gospel can never become regnant until the unity of Christ's followers is effected. Denominationalism has caused a spirit strange to Christianity to thrive under its name. It has meant a cheaper ministry with less preparation. It has broken community effectiveness. It has been responsible for useless waste and a perverted interpretation of duty. It has brought our Christianity into disrepute and made its force negligible in moral crises. It has delayed the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on the earth and crucified the Son of God afresh.

We may make specious defense by insisting that the denominations are but different battalions of the same army, or different members of the same household, but the proof of this is wanting when we observe the negative way in which the situation actually works out.

The fact that we try to prove that we are united is an index to our self condemnation and a proof that we really consider any degree of disunity wrong. We do not have too much church, but we do have too many churches. Whatever negatives brotherhood violates Christianity. No man can fully follow a Christ of love and walk in a path of prejudice. The Federated Church, Union Church, and Community Church are evidence of a great craving for oneness. At best they are only meliorative measures and emergency hospitals until a complete healing of a schism-gashed church can be effected. The venturesome spirit of our day is reaching out into Federating Councils, Conferences on Politics, Economics and Citizenship, Life and Work, Faith and Order, and many other fusing agencies. This program cannot long be followed without arriving at a unity that is real, as conference is productive of understanding, understanding leads to love, and love laughs at theological locksmiths. Denominations once identified each other by their vices. They are now coming to recognize each other by their virtues.

Every recent significant religious achievement has been either a united or a concerted movement and the latter must of necessity have much of the former in it. Missions had a rebirth in the Christian Church as a result of the Laymen's Mission-

ary Movement. The great promotional movements recently conducted became almost common cause, yet there was glory and distinction enough to go round.

Unity awaits only a program of co-operative work so big that there will be no time for fussing over the number of angels who can stand on the point of a pin, or in doing other simian antics. What is needed is enough hard, unselfish, actual Christian work together to wear out our prejudical thinking. Forming a basis for the new order is less difficult than getting rid of the numerous bases which prevent its arrival. The intellectual approach to it has no more hope of success than it has ever had. Religious ideas are individual; religious practices are co-operative. The only way people ever stand together is by standing something from each other which is not their preference. Church segregation cannot be overcome by the idea of an authoritative church. Individual thinking will sooner or later defy that premise and revolt will follow. No council can write a theological creed that will stand. The united church of the future must from the nature of humanity be non-sectarian, yet pan-sectarian. To all who enter it the creedal element must seem small and the heart element large. We can grow into union but we can never be legislated or resolved into it. Its primary purpose cannot be uniformity of opin-

ions, but co-operation in tasks. Its supreme concern must be first doing the complete will of God and second effecting the welfare of men. "The only dignity to be recognized in it will be the dignity of Christian service and the only aristocracy that of a Christlike mind."[1] In it, says Paul, (Gal. 3:28) "There can be neither Jew nor Greek," racial and national and theological differences are submerged; "bond nor free," industrial and economic differences blotted out; "male or female," sex differences forgotten; "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

But we must be about the building of it. Our abstractions and platitudes have meant little. Up to now we have followed a program of courteous gestures. Has not the period of action arrived?

Because a church is small it does not follow that it cannot play a great part. Majorities do not seem to have been the most important factor in the inauguration of achievements in righteousness. It is only smallness in spiritual conception and narrowness in vision which cripple. May God in these beginning days of our deliberations free us from littleness in thinking, meagerness in ministry, erroneous emphasis, provincial viewpoint, and selfish interpretation of Christianity and its

implications. Let us go into the mountain top with Him in fellowship, remembering that those who live on the mountain top have a longer day and a larger vision than those who live in the valley. Perhaps we shall not have to become martyrs as have His disciples in the past but all must have the martyr spirit. We may not achieve the distinction of heroes but we must have that heroic quality with grace to "live dangerously," that in all things—our affections, our ambitions, our abilities, our programs, our activities, our fellowships, our substance, in short our lives and all to which we relate them—that in all these He and His way may have the preeminence."

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